2023 Farm Bill Policy Recommendations

Why Compost?
Federal programs and policies to promote and incentivize compost manufacturing and use provide multifaceted benefits. Municipal and private composting practices divert organic materials from landfills and incinerators, creating new jobs, carbon sequestration and other ecosystem services, and a useful soil amendment and a natural fertilizer product for agricultural producers. Compost application is an important product for soil health and regenerative farming. Compost manufacturing is an economic driver and a practice that should expand its impact as a tool for the agricultural sector through the following policy and funding requests.

Policy Priorities

Increase Funding for the Food Loss and Waste Reduction Liaison
Title XXII- Miscellaneous
- The 2018 Farm Bill created the position of Food Loss and Waste Reduction Liaison. Authorizing the addition of new positions to establish an Office of Food Loss and Waste Reduction within the USDA will increase the expertise and capacity to support initiatives and programming to reduce food waste.

Expand the Composting and Food Waste Reduction Cooperative Agreement Program
Title XXII- Miscellaneous
- Increase both overall and project-level funding for CFWR program to support robust municipal composting programs.
- Revise legislative language to encourage subawards to private entities, stimulating municipal governments to contract with, and leverage the expertise and experience of, local compost businesses through the growing practice of public-private partnerships.
- Eliminate the matching requirement to reduce the burden on municipalities to match federal funds through direct funding or in-kind contributions; or ensure that contribution of land and other in-kind service is explicitly established as fulfilling a match requirement.

USCC Background and Expertise
The US Composting Council (USCC) supports compost manufacturing and utilization through outreach, education, training, and advocacy. Founded in 1990, USCC members include compost producers, researchers and soil scientists, and environmental advocates. USCC believes that compost manufacturing and compost utilization are central to creating healthy soils, clean air and water, a stable climate, and a sustainable society.
Incentivize On-Farm Compost Use through Federal Crop Insurance Programs

*Title XI- Crop Insurance*

- Provide premium discounts for farmers who utilize compost on their fields in lieu of chemical fertilizers, prioritizing soil health and resilience. An incentive program to encourage compost application may be modeled after the Pandemic Cover Crop Program piloted during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Update the Risk Management Agency’s Good Farming Practices to reflect the role of compost application as a risk-reduction strategy.

Recognize Composting & Compost Use as Climate-Smart Mitigation Practices Under NRCS and NIFA

*Title II- Conservation*

- Direct USDA NRCS to include compost production and use as an approved climate-smart mitigation strategy, ensuring that producers can leverage Environmental Quality Incentives Program and Conservation Stewardship Program financial support on compost-related activities.
- Add soil health and compost to the overall purpose of NIFA’s Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) grant program to prioritize research related to compost production and utilization. This change will codify the role of compost in federally-funded sustainable agricultural practices and ensure that compost producers have access to the latest science and information.

Invest in Local Economies Through Grants to Support Infrastructure, Training, and Innovative Food Recycling Partnerships

*Titles II- Conservation; VI- Rural Development; VII- Research, Extension, and Related Matter; X- Horticulture*

- Instruct USDA to conduct outreach to potential grant program applicants regarding opportunities for Rural Development, Value-Added Producer, and Agriculture Program Innovation grants to be leveraged in the development of compost-production facilities or initiatives.
- Increase funding to the Environmental Quality Incentive Program, Rural Innovation Stronger Economy Grant program, Value-Added Producer Grant program, Rural Development and Grant programs, and Agricultural Innovation Center grant program to meet the demand for compost and composting for agricultural producers seeking to adopt mitigation practices.
- Reduce barriers to participation in grant programs by extending funding to nonprofits (Value-Added Producer Grants) and eliminating matching requirements.
- Allocate pilot program funding under Title VII to research the uptake of PFAS by crops that most commonly use compost.

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